

The background image shows a close-up of a couple's hands clasped together. Overlaid on the hands is a yellow diagram of two interlocking circles, with a heart shape in the center. The title 'First Comes Love' is written in a large, white, serif font across the top of the image.

First Comes Love

How to build marriages & relationships that last

WEEK 2 - MARRIAGE IS A RACE TO THE BOTTOM OVERVIEW

The pastors of Grace have witnessed many, many marriages in our spiritual family facing trials, challenges, and even collapse. From our vantage point, we have seen one common denominator appear too many times to count: selfishness. Whether it's a mentality that says, "what I want/need is most important," or an addiction to control, or an aversion to doing the difficult work of conflict resolution because it's just too uncomfortable, a focus on self damages marriages faster than almost anything else.

In Romans 12, however, Paul calls Christ-followers to take a different approach: one of **self-giving love**. In v.10 he says, literally, "*outdo* one another in showing honor." The mental image of running a race with your spouse to outdo them in love and honor as they do the same (rather than looking for what love and honor they'll *give you*), is a powerful one. If we adopt this posture, we can reverse the corrosive influence of selfishness in our marriages and replace it with Christlike love which can bring healing and long-term fulfillment. Marriage is a race to the bottom.

Love each other with genuine affection. Take delight in honoring each other.

Romans 12:10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Romans 12:9-12. Do you have Christian relationships that are life-giving and joy-filled, tenderly affectionate? The kind of relationships where you feel at home and safe and known, and can be yourself? If so, how did you get there? If not, why not?
2. How would you describe the original Biblical conception of marriage, based on Genesis 2:18, 1:28, and 2:24-25?
3. Read Genesis 3:16 (NRSV) and 1 Kings 11:1-3.
 - a. How do these passages speak to what happened to marriages over the years?
 - b. What does "*in pain you will bring forth children*" mean to you?
4. Barry said, "Thanks to Jesus, we can return to Eden in our marriages."
 - a. What does that mean?
 - b. How could Philippians 2:3-5 be the key to returning to Eden?
 - c. What would it look like to return to Eden in your marriage? (or in any marriage)
5. Give examples of ways to "*take delight in honoring each other*" in order to "*love each other with genuine affection*" (from Romans 12:10).
6. Explain the encouragements that Barry gave about running this "race to the bottom" of marriage:
 - a. On your mark. Get set. Go.
 - b. Love your spouse in a language they understand.
 - c. Be willing to take the first step.

RESOURCES

On marriage: <https://gracechurch.us/marriage>

Marriage Retreat at Grace: <https://gracechurch.us/marriageretreat>